

STORAGE CONTAINER WITH CUTTING SURFACE THEREIN

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention relates to a covered food storage container,
5 and more particularly to such a container having a food cutting board surface
therein.

[0002] Covered food storage containers are commonplace items and are
available in a variety of different sizes and shapes, including circular, oval,
rectangular and other polygonal configurations. The cover container simply
10 comprises a food storage container defining an open top and a removable cover
configured and dimensioned to close the open top. The cover is movably
between a covering orientation wherein the cover is removably secured to the
container to cover the open top thereof and a removed orientation wherein the
cover is removed from the container to expose the open top thereof so that food
15 may pass therethrough into or out of the container.

[0003] Frequently, the food being stored within the covered container will
require cutting (e.g., slicing, dicing, comminuting and the like) prior to being
consumed. Preferably such cutting is performed on a food cutting board to avoid
damage to the cutting utensils (e.g., knife) or the substrate on which the cutting
20 is to be performed (e.g., a counter or tabletop). This can present a problem
where the space on the counter or tabletop is limited and does not readily
accommodate the combined footprints of the container, the removed cover, and
the cutting board. Further, time must be taken to locate an appropriate cutting
board and position it on the counter for cutting thereon. Indeed, if the cutting
25 board has been recently been used for food other than that in the container, it is
desirable to first thoroughly clean the cutting board to avoid any mixing of the
flavors of such food (let alone bacteria) with those of the food in the container.

[0004] Further, the cutting board surface is typically planar (except perhaps for a handle) and thus does not lend itself to a clean and easy transfer of the food cut thereon to a location remote therefrom.

5 **[0005]** Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide, in a preferred embodiment, a covered food storage container having associated therewith a food cutting board surface which does not require any footprint on the counter space beyond that required by the removed cover itself.

10 **[0006]** Another object to provide such a container wherein, in a preferred embodiment, the cutting board surface is secured to the cover for movement therewith as a unit, yet is readily manually separable from the cover -- for example, for cleaning purposes.

[0007] A further object is to provide such a container including, in a preferred embodiment, spout means on the cover for facilitating the manual movement of cut food from the cutting board surface to a remote location.

15 **[0008]** It is also an object of the present invention to provide such a container which, in a preferred embodiment, is simple and easy to manufacture, use and maintain.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

20 **[0009]** It has now been found that the above and related objects of the present invention are obtained in a covered food storage container having a food cutting board surface associated with the cover thereof. The covered container comprises (a) a food storage container defining an open top and (b) a cover unit including (i) a cover configured and dimensioned to close the open top, and (ii) a food cutting board surface removably secured to the cover for movement
25 therewith as a unit. The cover unit is movable between a covering orientation, wherein the cover is removably secured to the container to close the open top thereof, with the cutting board surface being disposed entirely within the covered

container, and a cutting board orientation, wherein the cover is removed from the container so as to expose the open top thereof and enable cutting of food on the cutting board surface.

5 **[0010]** In a preferred embodiment the container and the cover are formed of a first plastic, and the cutting board surface is formed of a material harder than the first plastic. Preferably the cutting board surface is readily manually separable from the cover.

10 **[0011]** The cover preferably additionally defines spout means extending from adjacent the cutting board surface to a location remotely spaced therefrom to facilitate manual movement of cut food from the cutting board surface to a remote location.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

15 **[0012]** The objects, features and advantages of the present invention will be more fully understood by reference to the following detailed description of the presently preferred, albeit illustrative, embodiments of the present invention when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawing wherein;

[0013] FIG. 1 is a top plan view of a generally rectangular covered container;

[0014] FIG. 2 is a side elevational view thereof;

20 **[0015]** FIGS. 3 and 4 are end elevational views thereof;

[0016] FIG. 5 is a bottom plan view of the cover unit in an inverted and removed cutting board orientation;

[0017] FIG. 6 is a fragmentary sectional view taken along the line 6-6 of FIG. 5;

- [0018]** FIG. 7 is a top plan view of a generally circular covered container;
- [0019]** FIG. 8 is a side elevational view thereof;
- [0020]** FIG. 9 is a side elevational view of the cover unit thereof in an inverted and removed cutting board orientation.
- 5 **[0021]** FIG. 10 is an exploded isometric view of a cover unit of a variant of the generally rectangular covered unit;
- [0022]** FIG. 11 is a bottom plan view thereof;
- [0023]** FIG. 12 is a top plan view thereof;
- [0024]** FIGS. 13 and 14 are side and end elevational views thereof,
10 respectively;
- [0025]** FIG. 15 is a fragmentary sectional view taken along the line 15-15 of FIG. 11;
- [0026]** FIG. 16 is a fragmentary side elevational view, partially in section, showing cut food being manually moved from the cutting board surface into the
15 container; and
- [0027]** FIG. 17 is a sectional view taken along the line 17-17 of FIG. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

- [0028]** Referring now to the drawing, and in particular to FIGS. 1-6 and 16-17 thereof, therein illustrated is a first embodiment of a covered food storage
20 container according to the present invention, generally designated by the reference numeral 10. The covered container 10 is of generally rectangular configuration in plan although alternatively it may be of other configurations such as circular (see FIGS. 7-9), oval or of other polygonal design in plan.

[0029] The covered container 10 comprises a food storage container, generally designated 12, defining an open top 14 as best seen in FIG. 16. The sidewall 16 of the container may be straight or bent and preferably defines an outwardly and downwardly extending ledge 18 to preclude slippage of the container 12 from a user's hand and facilitate separation of the cover from the container 12. The interior of container 12 may define a single open food storage compartment bounded by sidewall 16 or be subdivided into a plurality of smaller compartments by partitions 19.

[0030] The covered container 10 additionally comprises a cover unit, generally designated 20, best seen in its removed and inverted cutting board orientation in FIG. 16. The cover unit 20 includes a cover 24 configured and dimensioned to cover, and thereby close, the container open top 14. Adjacent its periphery the cover 24 defines an open bottom grooved portion 26 configured and dimensioned to releasably receive and resiliently grasp therein the top portion of container sidewall 16 (above ledge 18). The cover unit 20 further includes a food cutting board 30 removably secured to the cover 24 for movement therewith as a unit. The cutting board 30 has a surface 32 available for cutting of food thereon when the cover unit 20 is removed from the container 12 and inverted so that the cover 24 rests on a counter or tabletop 25, as best illustrated in FIG. 16.

[0031] More particularly, the cutting board 30 is disposed, at least partially, within a recess formed by the undersurface of cover 24, with portions of the peripheral edges of the cutting board 30 being received within an interior peripheral groove of the cover 24. Preferably, the bottom surface of cover 24 defines inwardly extending tabs or lips 40 (one or more lips 40 at each short end and two or more lips 40 on each long side) which extend beneath corresponding marginal edge portions 38 of the cutting board 30 to releasably secure the cutting board 30 and the cover 24 together for movement as a unit. The cover 24 is

preferably resiliently flexible such that it can be bent as necessary to accommodate the ready manual insertion and/or removal of the cutting board 30 therefrom, thereby to permit separate washing of the cutting board 30 and the cover 24 if desired.

5 **[0032]** The cover unit 20 is movable between the covering orientation (illustrated in FIGS. 1-3), wherein the cover 24 is removably secured to the container 12 to close the open top 14 thereof, and a cutting board orientation (illustrated in FIG. 16), wherein the cover 24 is removed from the container 12 so as to expose the open top 14 thereof. In the covering orientation, the cutting
10 board surface 32 is disposed entirely within the covered container 10, but in the cutting board orientation, the cover unit 20 is separated therefrom and inverted so as to enable the cutting of food on the cutting board surface 32 thus exposed.

15 **[0033]** The container 12 and the cover 24 are preferably formed of a first plastic, while the cutting board surface 32 (and typically the entire cutting board 30) is formed of a material harder than the first plastic and more suitable for cutting (e.g., wood or a second harder plastic) so that food may be cut thereon. The first plastic may be opaque, but is preferably transparent, translucent or tinted, as desired, to enable at least partial viewing of the contents of the container 12 without removal of the cover 24 from the container 12.

20 **[0034]** The cover 24 may additionally define spout means 50 curving upwardly and outwardly from adjacent the cutting board surface 32 to a location remotely spaced from the cover. As illustrated by the arrows of FIG. 16, this facilitates manual movement of cut food F from the cutting board surface 32 of the inverted cover 24 (shown resting on a counter 25) to a remote location
25 (illustrated as the container 12).

[0035] Referring now to FIGS. 7-9 in particular, therein illustrated is a circular second embodiment of the present invention, generally designated by the

reference numeral 10'. The circular covered container 10' of the second embodiment is composed of elements similar to the rectangular covered container 10 of the first embodiment, except for the absence of any spout means 50. Accordingly, similar elements of the circular embodiment 10' have the same numbers as the corresponding elements of the rectangular embodiment 10.

[0036] For a small circular embodiment 10' four or less equidistantly spaced lips 40 extending inwardly from the inner circumference of the cover 24 are typically sufficient, although a greater number of lips 40 may be preferred for larger circular embodiments.

10 **[0037]** Referring now to FIGS. 10-15 in particular, therein illustrated is a variant of the first embodiment 10, generally designated by the reference numeral 10". The variant 10" is similar to the first embodiment 10, except in the following respects:

1. There is no spout corresponding to spout means 50.
- 15 2. Instead of a single lip 40 at each short end, there are two such lips 40 on each short end.
3. Instead of the lips 40 extending under the underside of the cutting board 30 (as best seen in FIGS. 5 and 6), the lips 40 extend into respective recesses 100 formed in each peripheral sidewall of the cutting board
20 30 (as best seen in FIG. 10 and 15).
4. Thus, in variant 10' there are two recesses 100 on each short end of the cutting board 30 and three recesses 100 along each long side of the cutting board 30. Each recess 100 is configured and dimensioned to receive a corresponding one of the lips 40 so that the cutting board 30 is firmly held by the
25 cover 22 during normal use, but is readily manually removable therefrom - - for example, by flexing of the cover 22 relative to the more rigid cutting board 30.

[0038] Cumulatively the three embodiments illustrate that the containers 10, 10', 10" may vary in configuration (i.e., be rectangular, circular or of other configuration), the spout means 50 is optional, the number of lips 40 may be varied (e.g., with the size or configuration of the cutting board 30), etc. The
5 method of engagement between the cover 24 and the cutting board 30 may also be varied (e.g., the engagement of embodiments 10, 10' being visible and the engagement of embodiment 10" being hidden or concealed). The use of a "hidden" engagement between the cover 24 and the cutting board 30 (that is, the use of lips 40 and recesses 100) is not simply for aesthetic purposes, however, but
10 to maximize the useful area of the cutting board surface 32 and to minimize potential accidents which might occur when a knife 40 being used to cut food on the cutting board surface 32 suddenly encounters an overlapping lip 40.

[0039] To summarize, the present invention provides a covered food storage container having associated therewith a food cutting board surface which
15 does not require any footprint on the counter space beyond that required by the removed cover itself. The cutting board surface is removably secured to the cover for movement therewith as a unit, yet is preferably readily manually separable from the cover--for example, for cleaning purposes. Spout means are provided on the cover for facilitating the manual movement of cut food from the cutting board
20 surface to a remote location. The container is simple and easy to manufacture, use and maintain.

[0040] Now that the preferred embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described in detail, various modifications and improvement thereon will become readily apparent to those skilled in the art. Accordingly, the
25 spirit and scope of the present invention is to be construed broadly and limited only by the appended claims, and not by the foregoing specification.